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Programs and Services



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GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS
COLLECTION

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MASSACHUSETTS REHABILITATION COMMISSION
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
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The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission is the sole state agency charged with the administration of the federal/state Vocational Rehabilitation and Independent Living Programs, serving all individuals with disabilities except the blind. The Disability Determination Services division fulfills the adjudicatory functions for the Social Security Administration's income benefit program.

THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION DIVISION

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is an employment focused program for people with physical and/or mental disabilities whose handicapping conditions present barriers to employment and who can benefit from VR. Once eligible, a variety of employment oriented services may be provided for an individual. These might include; evaluation and assessment, counseling and guidance, vocational planning, training, resume and interviewing seminars, job placement services, and Follow-up.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS INCLUDE:

Van Adaptation Services and Adaptive Housing—subsequent van modifications are available to persons who are competitively employed.

Injured Workers Program—provides rehabilitation services to industrially injured workers who are referred by the Department of Industrial Accidents.

Eligibility Unit for Turning 22—the statewide unit which determines eligibility of a youth to have a transition plan developed from special education services to an appropriate public human service agency.

Supported Work /Employment for People with Disabilities—locally based grants providing transitional supported work services for people with disabilities.

Extended Employment Program—provides employment for severely disabled persons who can maintain at least 25% work productivity in a sheltered or other highly supervised work setting. Some people enter part or full-time competitive employment as a result of this program.

Services for Deaf Individuals—provided via a statewide network of specialized rehabilitation counselors.

Bilingual Specialty Services—available at each area office by arrangement.

THE INDEPENDENT LIVING DIVISION

The Independent Living Division (IL) provides coordination, information, referral and counseling to people with severe physical and/or mental disabilities. Its goal is to assist individuals with severe disabilities to live independently in the community. Services are primarily intended for those not yet ready to enter VR Division programs.

PROGRAMS OFFERED INCLUDE:

IL Centers/Programs—a statewide network of centers and programs which provide a variety of services to individuals with severe disabilities so that they may live independently. Some services include peer counseling, skills training, advocacy and, on a limited basis, adaptive housing, transportation and other supportive services to eligible individuals.

Home Care Assistance Program—provides services for adults with disabilities ages 18-59.

Personal Care Assistance—provides in-home assistance with personal care needs to people with severe mobility impairments who are employed.

Statewide Head Injury Program (SHIP)—provides case management services to people who have sustained a traumatic head injury. SHIP works with private vendors, hospitals, neuropsychologists and other agencies to develop programs and to deliver services to meet individual client needs.

Consumer Involvement Program—assists the agency in improving service delivery by gathering information from people with disabilities via statewide and local forums on implementing programs and policies of the agency.

THE DISABILITY DETERMINATION SERVICES DIVISION

The Disability Determination Service Division (DDS) determines eligibility for Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for individuals who have a medically determined physical or mental impairment which precludes them from working for 12 months or more, or is expected to result in death.

DDS is funded and regulated federally by the Social Security Administration and managed by MRC. Disability Determination examiners review claims for potential referral to the other MRC divisions for vocational rehabilitation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL THE APPROPRIATE TELEPHONE NUMBERS LISTED BELOW. ALL LINES ARE TDD ACCESSIBLE.

Administration Office (voice) 727-2183
..... 1-800-245-6543
..... TDD answering machine, 727-9063
General Information 727-2183
Ombudspersons 727-2171
Commissioner's Office 727-2172
Van Adaptation/Adaptive Housing 727-2184
Injured Worker's Program 727-2184
Eligibility Unit/Turning 22 727-2184
Supported Work Programs 727-2586

Extended Employment 727-2586
Services for the Deaf 727-2194
Independent Living Division 727-8418
Home Care Assistance 727-2196
Statewide Head Injury Program 727-8732
Personal Care Assistance 727-4828
Consumer Involvement 727-8418
DDS 1-800-223-3212 (TDD)
..... 1-800-422-7200 (Boston)
..... 1-800-551-5532 (Worcester)



The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in employment, and public services provided by government agencies. If consumers or employees of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission believe that they have been discriminated against on the basis of disability, they should contact the Commission's ADA Coordinator: Albert Jones Jr., 27-43 Wormwood Street, Boston, MA 02210-1616, Telephone 617-727-5113 (voice/TDD).

HCA's and the Consumer

The use of a Home Care Assistant (HCA) is an alternative to receiving homemaking services through a contracted vendor agency. The following information is a synopsis of the Home Care Assistant (HCA) program.

COMMUNICATION

Communication between the HCA, the consumer and the case manager is essential to the program's effectiveness. After finding a HCA, a consumer should first discuss the job duties with the HCA and resolve any concerns or difficulties. The consumer should tell and/or demonstrate how to complete all of the desired tasks. The HCA should ask for clarification, if necessary, at this point.

A case manager is available to facilitate communication and assist in problem solving between the consumer and HCA. The case manager will contact both the consumer and the HCA to discuss the job and the breakdown of hours and will also be involved with the Annual Review Process.

THE CONSUMER AND THE CASE MANAGER

A consumer should contact the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) case manager when she or he:

- feels the need to change to a new HCA
- needs an outside opinion for resolution of an issue with the HCA
- has questions on duties which the HCA cannot perform
- feels the hours authorized are inappropriate and/or there has been a change in the assigned tasks.

THE CASE MANAGER AND THE HCA

A HCA should contact the MRC case manager when:

- the consumer is to be hospitalized
- the consumer is becoming too challenging or difficult to work with
- the HCA feels that providing assistance to a particular consumer is not maximizing their independence in their home or potential for independent living
- the HCA feels the hours authorized are inappropriate and/or there has been a change in the assigned tasks.

WHO IS THE HCA?

A home care assistant is an individual (other than a spouse, parent, son, daughter, son-in-law, or daughter-in-law) who is hired by a consumer to do homemaking tasks which are difficult for the consumer to do because of his/her disability. HCA services help the consumer to be more independent.

RECRUITING AND HIRING A HCA

There are different approaches to finding a HCA. One way is to hire a friend or neighbor whom you think would be a good worker. Another way is to advertise in your local paper, grocery store, or community organization. Many consumers have also found "word of mouth" to be helpful when looking for a HCA.

As soon as the consumer has found a potential HCA, the consumer and this individual should speak with a case manager. The case manager will gather any necessary information and explain the HCA program in detail.

HCA TASKS

The HCA is responsible for the individual plan which could include: grocery shopping, meal preparation, laundry, and light housekeeping. The tasks a HCA CANNOT perform for the consumer include:

- Personal Care, including bathing, shampoos, feeding, and transfers
- Companionship
- Heavy spring cleaning, dry cleaning, or polishing furniture
- Transportation to doctor appointments.
- Pet care
- Moving/Packing
- Windows
- Waxing floors

WHO IS THE EMPLOYER?

The HCA is hired by the consumer and considered to be self-employed. He/she must report earnings and pay the appropriate taxes. If a HCA receives AFDC, SSI, GR or any other public assistance, they must also report the earnings and pay the appropriate taxes. The income earned as a HCA will be reported income.

1099 FORM

MRC will send a 1099 Form by January 31st each year for the previous year to HCAs who earn \$600.00 or more. Those HCAs who earn less than \$600.00 per year are responsible for obtaining the 1099 form at either a local post office or the IRS. MRC will not send out 1099 forms for amounts under \$600.00.

As previously noted, the HCA's paycheck is reported as earned income. If a HCA receives AFDC, SSI, GR, SSDI, or other public assistance, they must check with a local Social Security office and inform them of their pay as a HCA. The HCA should discuss what the minimum amount is that he/she is allowed to earn.

PAYMENT

This packet contains time sheets and a tax verification form. To receive payment the HCA must complete the tax verification form and return it to MRC immediately. At the end of each month, mail the completed time sheet (signed by both HCA and consumer). Pre-addressed envelopes are also enclosed. Approximately 2 weeks after mailing the time sheets, a check will be processed and sent to the HCA. The first check will be late due to processing of the tax verification form.

Please clarify any questions, especially when complications arise. All questions should be directed to the consumer's CASE MANAGER. Those in the 617 area code should dial 727-2196 or 727-1595. Those outside the 617 area code, dial 1-800-223-2559 or 1-800-822-2198.



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Protective Services and people with disabilities

Since 1988 the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) has provided services to people with physical disabilities who have been injured as a result of abuse. The Protective Services program is required by state law. The law which mandates this program also mandates the reporting by many professionals of cases of suspected abuse. Individuals who report suspected cases are protected from being sued by this law as are people in the community who report cases of abuse which they believe are happening.

SUSPECTED ABUSE

Cases of suspected abuse should be reported to the Disabled Persons Protection Commission (DPPC) who refers complaints to MRC or the Departments of Mental Health and Retardation depending on the disability of the individual being referred. All referred individuals with physical disabilities are referred to MRC.

When MRC receives a referral, someone from the Protective Services Unit will visit with the person who is reported to have been abused.

PROTECTIVE SERVICES UNIT

The Protective Services Unit works with that individual to determine if there has been abuse and what types of services are needed. Services that are used range from emergency shelter and assistance, to family and individual counseling. MRC's focus is to work with the victim who at all times, may refuse any and all services. Most people are involved for less than six months, although that period is often longer where individuals have to leave their homes because they are not safe there.

Most of the complaints received involve situations of neglect and physical abuse related to the stress and strains of the care taking relationship. Many situations go unreported due to fear that the intervention will make things worse when, in fact, studies indicate that most situations of domestic violence become worse when there is no help provided.

Reports of abuse and calls for help can be made at any time with the Disabled Persons Protection Commission at 1-800-426-9009. A TDD is available at this number.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CALL THE PROTECTIVE SERVICE UNIT AT MRC AT (617) 727-7046.

THE DPPC 24-HOUR REPORTING HOTLINE IS 1-800-426-9009.



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Home Care Assistance Program

The Home Care Assistance Program(HCAP) is part of MRC's Independent Living Services. Our goal is to help each individual participate in the community and live as independently as possible.

WHAT WE DO

Through MRC's Home Care Assistance Program, the following services may be provided:

- Service coordination by MRC /HCAP case managers.
- In home assessment of homemaking needs by vendors under contract.
- Paid homemaking services by agencies under contract with MRC/HCAP (Homemakers) or by individuals hired by the consumer (Home Care Assistants).

MRC/HCAP pays for homemaking services for adults with functional disability or illness once eligibility is determined by MRC/HCAP staff. Eligibility is based on the results of an in-home assessment, medical documentation and other pertinent data. At minimum, an annual review for continuation of services is required.

When there are budget constraints, MRC/HCAP will implement a Priority System to ensure that people most in need will receive homemaker services first. Financial eligibility is determined.

WHO WE SERVE

The MRC Home Care Assistance Program will provide homemaker services for adults with disabilities who live in Massachusetts, ages 18 through 59, in order to enable people to live more independently. Disability, within the MRC/HCAP is defined as a physical and/or mental condition preventing the individual from performing specific homemaking tasks, thereby posing risk for re-entry into a hospital or institution, or further disabling complications. The person's disability can relate to an acute condition, a chronic condition, or a terminal illness.

OTHER PROGRAMS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Eligibility requirements for homemaking services or other homecare services offered vary from agency to agency. For those individuals not served by MRC, other programs are available which may meet their needs.

Each of these programs must be applied for separately:

- Adults through age 59, who are legally blind, may be served by the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB). In the Boston area, call 727-5550 or, toll-free in eastern Massachusetts, MCB, 1-800-392-6450. The toll-free MCB number west of Worcester 1-800-332-2772.
- Individuals with children may be served by the Department of Social Services (DSS). Children with disabilities may be served by the Department of Public Health (DPH). Call your area office.
- A person sixty years of age or older may be served by the Homemaker Program of the Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA). Call, toll-free, 1-800- 882-2003.

FUNCTIONS OF A HOMEMAKER

The tasks generally authorized to be performed by a homemaker employed by a homemaker agency or by an individual Home Care Assistant hired by the consumer are:

- Meal preparation
- Food planning
- Grocery shopping (*including medications pick up*)
- Laundry
- Light housekeeping

The homemaker does *not* :

- Provide personal care assistance (*feed the consumer, transfer consumer from bed to chair, provide shampoos*)
- Provide companionship for the consumer because the consumer feels "unsafe" alone
- Do heavy chores/spring cleaning
- Assist with moving
- Accompany the person to medical or other appointments

WHAT HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS, CONSUMERS AND SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES SHOULD KNOW

Telephone referrals are taken statewide. Ask for the case manager for your community. At that time, the Priority System, if in effect, will be explained. Medical documentation is needed and should address: (a) diagnosis, (b) what specific limitations to performing homemaking tasks are caused as a result of the diagnosis, (c) the expected duration of health problems/disability.

- All consumer applicants have the right to appeal any decision with which they do not agree.
- Grocery lists are provided by the consumer to the HM/HCA worker.

If the consumer needs assistance in comprehending their prescribed diet, he/she should seek assistance from their health care professional. The MRC/HCAP program has no Meals on Wheels component. This service may be available through local community services.

There is a limit on hours for homemaker services: *12 hours per week.*

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Home Care Assistance Program 617-727-2196
Central, Western, Northern 1-800-223-2559
Southern, Cape and Islands 1-800-822-2198



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ELMER C. BARTELS
Commissioner

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Executive Office of Human Services Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

Fort Point Place - Suite 600

*27-43 Wormwood Street
Boston, Ma. 02210-1606*

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

As of the 1986 and 1992 amendments to the 1973 Rehabilitation Act, Supported Employment is a new and important concept that broadens the scope of the vocational objective within the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. The Supported Employment goal is competitive work in an integrated setting requiring long-term support or extended services. The need for long-term support or extended services to maintain employment is the essential distinction between supported employment and traditional competitive employment and supported work type programs. There are two public vocational rehabilitation resources to obtain Federal supported employment services. They are through Title I and Title VI(c) of the Rehabilitation Act.

The MRC Office of Employment Services has had the authorization and responsibility for the development and implementation of Supported Employment in Massachusetts from the initial stages. In addition to providing counseling and case management services to assigned clients, program development, and contract monitoring: the OES/MRC has and will continue to be recognized as the lead agency in Massachusetts to provide information, training, and technical assistance to promote supported employment throughout the Commonwealth. The OES also works closely with other State agencies to collaborate extended services and the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) to establish, implement and maintain a system for State unit compliance with Federal regulatory requirements regarding casework documentation.

WHAT IS IT?

The term supported employment means competitive work in integrated work settings for individuals with the most severe disabilities:

- for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred; or
- for whom competitive employment has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a severe disability; and
- who, because of the nature and severity of their disability, need Intensive supported employment services or extended services in order to perform such work.

Such term includes transitional employment for persons with the most severe disabilities due to mental illness as an alternative supported employment model. Although the initial job placement is temporary, continuous job placements, as outlined in the IWRP, must be provided until the individual achieves job permanency.

ELIGIBILITY

Supported employment services are to be provided to individuals with the most severe disabilities who traditionally have been unable to perform competitive work or who have performed competitive work only intermittently. These individuals have the ability or potential to engage in a training program leading to supported employment and most importantly have a need for on-going support services in order to perform and maintain competitive work.

DEFINITIONS

Supported Employment Services:

Services such as, assessment, evaluation, job development, job coaching, rehabilitation technology, and other appropriate services needed to support and maintain an individual with the most severe disability in order to achieve their goal as outlined in the Individual Written Rehabilitation Plan/Program Amendment that:

- are provided singly or in combination and are organized and made available in such a way to assist an eligible individual in entering or maintaining integrated, competitive employment;
- are based on a determination of the needs of an eligible individual, as specified in an individualized written rehabilitation plan; and
- are provided by the designated State unit for a period of time not to extend beyond 18 months upon placement (unless under special circumstances the eligible individual and the rehabilitation counselor or coordinator jointly agree to extend the time in order to achieve the rehabilitation objectives identified in the IWRP)

Competitive Employment:

Placement in an integrated setting for the maximum number of hours possible based on the unique strengths, resources, interests, concerns, abilities, and capabilities of the individuals. They are established and justified as part of the IWRP. Transition from time limited to extended services should not occur until the individual has substantially met this hourly work goal. The individual must be compensated fairly and consistent with the wage standards provided for in the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Integrated Setting:

The individual may work alone or be part of a work group with co-workers who are not disabled. If there are no co-workers or the only co-workers are members of a small work group of not more than eight individuals with disabilities, the employment setting must provide daily contact in the immediate work setting with other personnel or the general public.

On-going Support Services:

Services needed to support and maintain an individual in supported employment. These services are based on a determination by the designated State unit and the individual. On-going support services occur from the time of job placement, during the transition and continuing throughout the extended services and terms of the employment.

Extended Services:

On-going support services provided by a State agency, a private, non-private organization or any other appropriate resource or means of natural support once the time limited vocational rehabilitation services are completed and consist of the provisions of specific services needed to maintain employment.

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES PROGRAM

THE MISSION OF THE MRC VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

The mission of the MRC Vocational Rehabilitation Program is to assure necessary and appropriate vocational rehabilitation services to eligible consumers so that those individuals may enter part or full time community based, competitive employment.

WHAT IS THE MRC VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM AND ITS RESULTS?

In Massachusetts, there is the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind and the MRC Vocational Rehabilitation Program for eligible individuals with disabilities who are available and able to attain employment as a result of vocational rehabilitation services.

The MRC Vocational Rehabilitation Program is the federal-state vocational rehabilitation program focused on individuals with a severe disability(s) to be employed. The successful result from the MRC-VR Program is employment in a job. Ideally, the consumer gets his/her own job, with assistance from the MRC-VR staff and others working with the consumer to get a job. Once employed, the MRC-graduate-consumer may wish to pursue getting "the job"/reaching the consumer's ultimate employment goal.

SERVICES PROVIDED TO THE ELIGIBLE CONSUMER

(Some of the MRC-VR services available; based on an Individual Written Rehabilitation Plan for each consumer):

- Vocational counseling, guidance and assistance in job placement.
- Training program, including college, if appropriate, to attain entry level employment;
- Rehabilitation technology services;
- Occupational licenses, tools, initial stocks & supplies for work;
- Job coach services;
- Supported Work Program;
- Supported Employment Program;
- Transitional Employment Services;
- Assistance to develop a "PASS" (for SSI recipients) to work;
- Van modification services;
- Housing Adaption services;
- Necessary & appropriate vocational rehabilitation services based on an individual IWRP.

WHO PAYS?

When possible, the consumer and/or family financially participates in the individual vocational rehabilitation plan; based on a Financial Need Determination by the MRC.

The MRC-VR first utilizes comparable benefits that are available: such as PELL Grants, Health Insurance, services available from other agencies to which the individual is deemed eligible.

WHEN SHOULD I APPLY?

You can apply at any time. For high school age students with disabilities, it is suggested that you apply 2 years before high school graduation or before turning age 22, whichever comes first. There is no upper age limit to apply.

QUESTIONS

Contact one of the 27 MRC-VR Offices, or
MRC Ombudsperson (1-800-245-6543)

IMPORTANT

This notice contains information about your rights or obligations, and should be translated immediately. If you need a translator ask for a listing of translation services

IMPORTANTE

Questo avviso contiene informazioni sui vostri diritti e doveri e deve essere tradotto immediatamente. Se avete bisogno di un servizio di traduzione, richiedete una lista di tali servizi

IMPORTANTE

Este aviso contém informações acerca dos seus direitos e obrigações e deve ser traduzido imediatamente. Se precisar de uma tradução, peça uma lista de agências de tradução no escritório

IMPORTANTE

Este aviso contiene información acerca de sus derechos y obligaciones y debe ser traducido inmediatamente. Si usted necesita un servicio de traducción, pida un listado de dichos servicios en la oficina

IMPORTANT

Cet avis contient des renseignements sur vos droits et vos obligations et doit être traduit immédiatement. Si vous avez besoin d'une traduction, demandez une liste des agences de traduction

重要事項

此通知包含有關您的權利和義務，應立即被翻譯。如果您需要翻譯，請向本處索取有關翻譯服務的清單。

ສຳຄັນ

ຄຳເຕົ້າໜັງນີ້ມີຂໍ້ມູນກ່ຽວກັບທິດສະດີຂໍ້ສະເໜີຂອງທ່ານ, ແລະມັນຄວນຖືກໂຕ້ປ່ອຍໃດໆເທິງທັນໃດ. ຖ້າວ່າທ່ານຕ້ອງການຜັບປຸງ, ໂຕ້ຖາມເຖິງບັນຊີລາຍຊື່ນັກກົດໝາຍປະຕິບັດງານກົດໝາຍວ່າງງານ. ປະຈຳທ້ອງຖິ່ນຂອງທ່ານ.

සෞභ්ග්‍ය සඳහා

ඔබේ ප්‍රකාශනයේ හැඟිල්ලන් සහ අයිතිවාසිකම් පිළිබඳව. ඔබේ ප්‍රකාශනයේ හැඟිල්ලන් සහ අයිතිවාසිකම් පිළිබඳව. ඔබේ ප්‍රකාශනයේ හැඟිල්ලන් සහ අයිතිවාසිකම් පිළිබඳව. ඔබේ ප්‍රකාශනයේ හැඟිල්ලන් සහ අයිතිවාසිකම් පිළිබඳව.

ΠΡΟΣΟΧΗ

Αυτή ή ειδοποίηση περιέχει πληροφορίες για τα δικαιώματά σας ή τις υποχρεώσεις σας και πρέπει να μεταφραστεί άμεσα. Εάν χρειάζεστε μεταφραστή, ζητήστε να σας δώσουν έτοιμους μεταφραστές στο D.E.T. γραφείο της περιοχής σας.

QUAN TRONG

Bản thông cáo này bao gồm những chi tiết về quyền lợi cũng như nghĩa vụ của quý vị, và nên được dịch ngay lúc cần. Nếu cần dịch, xin quý vị hỏi.

General Information About Who Can Assist You For Your Personal Needs (Services, Recreation, Housing, etc.)

Mass. Networks of Information Providers for People With Disabilities
1-800-642-0249

Peer Counseling/Advice From Another Individual With Disability

10 Independent Living Centers in Massachusetts

(for the one near you)

1-800-245-6543

Assistance/Advocacy Services

Mass. Office on Disability

1-800-322-2020

MRC Ombudsperson for a problem with the MRC

1-800-245-6543

(or, call the Director of the location serving you)

Social Security Information

1-800-772-1213

WHAT IS A FINANCIAL AID PACKAGE?

There are three different types of financial aid; grants and scholarships, loans and college work-study. A financial aid "package" consists of a combination of these types of financial aid.

EDUCATION LOANS

IS IT REALISTIC FOR A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY TO BORROW MONEY TO PAY FOR COLLEGE?

Yes, and most people will have to do so in order to cover all their costs.

WHAT IF A STUDENT'S DISABILITY PREVENTS WORKING IN TRADITIONAL JOBS OR IF AFTER-GRADUATION PROSPECTIVE EARNINGS ARE SO LOW THEY PREVENT MINIMAL REPAYMENT OF AN EDUCATIONAL LOAN?

If the disability exists on or before the date of the loan, the student is *responsible for repaying the loan*. Before making the decision to borrow, people should be realistic about whether their disability is one which involves substantial ongoing medical expenses or which will make it difficult for them to earn enough to repay a loan. If there is a strong possibility that they will not be able to repay a loan because of the nature of their disability, people should not borrow.

VR agencies have the option of providing financial assistance in place of a loan in a financial aid package if it appears unlikely that the student will be able to repay the loan.

It may be possible in some cases to delay payment of educational loans. Students should discuss possibilities for delaying loan repayment (deferments or forbearance) with the school's financial aid office or the lender.

If you default on your student loan, you are not eligible to receive VR agency assistance until you have followed a repayment schedule for at least six months and are eligible for financial aid again.

OTHER CONCERNS

HOW DOES FINANCIAL AID AFFECT SSDI AND SSI BENEFITS?

Grants, regardless of the amount, have no affect on SSDI. Grant funds which exceed tuition, fees and books are considered unearned income for SSI recipients, and so SSI benefits are reduced by that amount.

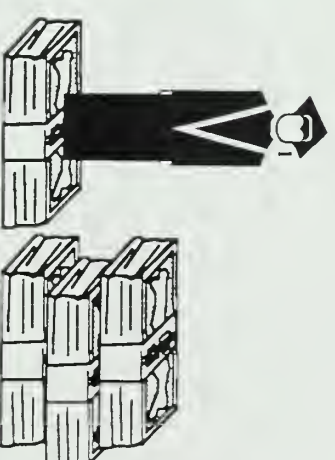
Loans do not affect SSDI or SSI benefits.

College work-study awards are considered employment, and so may affect both SSDI and SSI benefits. To determine how college work-study is treated in each situation, the student should contact the local Social Security Office.

A college work-study award may be an excellent opportunity for students with disabilities to test the employment market and to build a resume. There are usually work opportunities both on-campus and with community agencies where students can be effectively employed.

WHAT SHOULD STUDENTS DO IF THEY FEEL THAT THEY HAVE NOT RECEIVED SUFFICIENT FINANCIAL AID?

Contact the college's financial aid office or the VR agency and ask for reconsideration. Report any special circumstances, including changes in financial circumstances and those related to their disability.



FINANCIAL AID FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Questions and Answers

prepared by the
Higher Education Information Center,
a division of
The Education Resources Institute
in collaboration with the
Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

Contributors to this brochure: Disability Law Center,
Mass. Commission for the Blind, UMASS/Boston, Mass.
Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators.

WHO IS A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY?

If you have a physical or mental impairment which, for you, constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment, then you may be considered disabled by most publicly funded rehabilitation programs. An impediment may involve your ability to see, hear, walk, speak, learn, breathe or work.

WHERE CAN A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY GO FOR HELP TO OBTAIN FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR COLLEGE?

Most financial aid for educational expenses is distributed by colleges and schools. They administer funds from the federal government and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Many colleges also use their own funds to assist those who otherwise could not afford to attend.

VR AGENCY SERVICES FOR STUDENTS

WHAT DOES A VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (VR) AGENCY DO FOR A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY WHO WANTS TO GO TO SCHOOL?

The public VR agency can provide financial assistance to eligible persons with a disability whose Individual Written Rehabilitation Plan (IWRP) includes college or technical school training as a means of achieving a vocational goal leading to competitive employment. VR agencies can provide a variety of assistance depending on your financial needs. State VR agencies require college-bound clients to apply for financial aid from the school or college they plan to attend.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR VR SERVICES?

You must have a physical or mental disability that constitutes an impediment to employment. It also must be determined that you will benefit

in terms of an employment outcome from vocational rehabilitation services which will prepare you for entering, engaging in, or retaining gainful employment.

APPLYING FOR FINANCIAL AID

WHAT DOES A PERSON DO TO APPLY FOR FINANCIAL AID FROM A COLLEGE, AND WHEN DOES HE/SHE APPLY?

You must complete an application called the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) which you obtain from a high school guidance office or the college you are planning to attend. In some cases, schools also have their own form for you to complete. You should complete the FAFSA before you are accepted for admission. Check with the college for the application deadline. You may also need to complete several other application forms. Check with the school to see what is required.

IS THE FAFSA DIFFICULT TO COMPLETE?

If you have certain documents, the FAFSA can be completed without difficulty. You should first read through the entire form and then gather the documents you will need:

- Most recent federal tax forms (IRS Form 1040, 1040A or 1040EZ)
- W-2 form and records of prior year earnings
- Records of non-taxed income such as AFDC, Social Security and Veterans' benefits
- Current bank statements
- Records of business, farm, stocks, bonds, and other investments

Read the instruction for each question before you answer it. If you do not understand a question, call the Higher Education Information Center's toll-free number, 1-800-442-1171, or the financial aid office at the school to which you are applying.

HOW DO COLLEGES DETERMINE A STUDENT'S ELIGIBILITY FOR FINANCIAL AID?

After the student has been accepted, each school or college establishes a "cost of education" for the student. The information submitted on the FAFSA is put through a standard calculation called "Federal Methodology" to determine how much the student and family are expected to contribute toward the "cost of education." The "expected family contribution" is subtracted from the "cost of education" to determine the student's financial aid eligibility.

For example:

\$10,000 (cost of education)
\$4,000 (expected family contribution)
<hr/>
\$ 6,000 (financial aid eligibility)

HOW DOES A STUDENT REPORT UNUSUAL NEEDS AND WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES THAT SCHOOLS MAY CONSIDER IN DETERMINING THE STUDENT'S COST OF EDUCATION?

Special or unusual circumstances are not collected on the FAFSA so they should be reported by letter or in an interview with the college's financial aid officer. Special or unusual circumstances include items such as:

- Food and care for seeing-eye dogs
- Upkeep and maintenance of wheelchairs
- Transportation costs related to disability

Your Housing Rights

You are protected against discrimination In the sale or rental of housing. State and federal laws provide broad legal protections for persons with disabilities. It is illegal to refuse to sell a home or rent an apartment to an individual because they have a disability. It is illegal to charge someone a higher rent because they have a disability. It is illegal to inquire about the nature of an individual's disability unless the question is directly relevant to meeting the requirements of tenancy.

In both the State and Federal laws, disability is defined as having (a) physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities, (b) a record of having such an impairment, or (c) being regarded as having such an impairment.

“Major life activities” include: caring for one’s self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning and working.

Landlords Must Allow Reasonable Modifications To Accommodate Individuals With Disabilities...

Under Federal law all properties except owner-occupied buildings with four or fewer units must:

- Allow tenants to make reasonable modifications to their units.
- Make reasonable accommodation in rules, policies, practices and services to allow persons with disabilities equal opportunity to use and enjoy dwelling unit, including public and common areas.

The State Law is similar but applies to any non-owner occupied building with three or more units.

In addition, under State law:

If you live in publically assisted housing or the building has ten or more units, the owner is required to make and finance reasonable modifications.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING THE NEW LAW OR BELIEVE YOU HAVE BEEN DISCRIMINATED AGAINST YOU SHOULD CONTACT ANY OF THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES:

U.S. Dept. of HUD, Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity
10 Causeway Street, Boston, MA 02222 617/565-5337/5308, 617/835-5453 TTY

Mass Commission Against Discrimination, One Ashburton Place
Boston, MA 02108 617/727-3990 TTY ext. 221/222

Mass Office of Disability, One Ashburton Place
Boston, MA 02108 617/727-7440 TTY/Voice

*and Your City or Town's Fair Housing Commission, Human Rights Committee and Affirmative
Action/Equal Opportunity Office*

YOUR LOCAL INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTER CAN ALWAYS PROVIDE ASSISTANCE...

Boston Center for Independent Living, 617/338-6665, 617/338-6662 (TTY/Voice)

Deaf, Inc., 617/254-4041 (TTY/Voice)

MetroWest Center for Independent Living.. 508/875-7853 (TTY/Voice)

Northeast IL Program, 508/687-4288 (TTY/Voice)

IL Center of North Shore, 617/593-7500 (TTY/Voice)

Southeast Center for Independent Living, 508/679-9210 (TTY/Voice)

Independent Associates, 508/880-5325 (TTY/Voice)

Cape Organization for the Rights of the Disabled (CORD), 508/775-8300 (TTY/Voice)

Center for Living and Working, 508/798-0350 (TTY/Voice)

Stavros 413/256-0473 (TTY/Voice)

Ad-Lib 413/442-7047 (TTY/Voice)



The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in employment, and public services provided by government agencies. If consumers or employees of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission believe that they have been discriminated against on the basis of disability, they should contact the Commission's ADA Coordinator: Albert Jones Jr., 27-43 Wormwood Street, Boston, MA 02210-1616, Telephone 617-727-5113 (voice/TDD).

Consumer Involvement and MRC

The foundation to the commitment of consumer involvement at the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) is the basic assumption that people with disabilities have life experiences and expertise which is a valuable resource to assist in the development of clear policy and to aid in the solution of problems relative to MRC objectives.

MRC reaches out to consumers for their input in the policy-making process of the agency. Staff of each MRC division—Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Independent Living (IL), and Disability Determination Service (DDS)—meet regularly with former present, or potential clients to seek their advice and counsel.

The Statewide Advisory Council (SAC), mandated by state law, meets with the Commissioner and members of his staff six times a year. Sub-committees work on prioritized issues selected through a membership survey. Membership includes a mix of consumers, employers, vendors, and other state agency representatives.

The Independent Living Advisory Council, mandated by federal law, meets to provide input to MRC the Commission for the Blind, and the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing relative to Independent Living Services. This Council maintains a membership of at least 51% parents or consumers of IL services.

The Advisory Council of the Division of Disability Determination Services, at MRC provides valuable citizen input and advocacy to staff who are charged by the Social Security Administration to determine the eligibility of all disabled individuals who apply for Social Security and Medicaid Disability Assistance benefits in Massachusetts.

The Statewide Head Injury Program (SHIP), within the IL Division, holds regularly scheduled Advisory Council meetings. These meetings are attended primarily by parents, professionals, and individuals with traumatic head injury.

Regional and Area Advisory Councils meet with agency staff to discuss and make recommendations with regard to local client service needs and access to the community.

Individual Consumer Consultants (ICC's) are paid \$12.50 per hour to provide Commission staff consultation in areas of expertise such as:

- program planning, development, or evaluation
- Assistance in studies and surveys
- Assessment of physical accessibility of office/conference space
- Staff and Consumer training

Interpreters, Personal Care Attendants, and Travel Reimbursements are provided to consumers as support services when needed while performing ICC or advisory council duties.

A Consumer Conference is held each year for the purpose of information-sharing, strategy-setting, and networking. Representatives from the IL Centers and the Massachusetts Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities (MCCD) as well as the MRC Advisory Councils, take an active part in developing the agenda for this conference.

Many Area Office Staff assist locally-based consumer groups in their efforts to build a more enlightened and accessible community—improving the surrounding environment for disabled people in general and, specifically, MRC clients.

The Statewide Supervisor for the Consumer Involvement Program stays in close touch with disability rights and services organizations around the state by attending meetings and assisting on advocacy projects.

For a more indepth description of the Consumer Involvement Program with its close to 20 committees, task forces, and work groups; see the updated "Program Statement and Plan" or call Emeka Nwokeji at (617) 727-8418.

IMPORTANT NAMES AND NUMBERS

Emeka Nwokeji, Consumer Involvement, Director (617) 727-8418, 727-9063 (TDD)
John Chappell, Independent Living, Deputy Commissioner (617) 727-4828, 727-9063 (TDD)
Karen Langley, IL Director (617) 727-8418, 727-9063 (TDD)
Debra Kamen, Statewide Head Injury Program, Director (617) 727-8732 (voice/TDD)
Tom Chaffee, Disability Determination Service (617) 654-7500



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On the Job Training

As an employer you're interested in finding and keeping a skilled employee that will contribute to the organization. You need qualified applicants with a minimum of cost and time spent on recruitment, screening and training. MRC's On-the-Job-Training Program (OJT) suits your needs.

OJT WORKS FOR YOU

A formal agreement is established to define the understandings and responsibilities of all parties. The agreement is simple, easy to complete and includes the specific areas of training such as content, outcomes and methods. Copies of the signed agreement are distributed to the trainee, you and the trainee's counselor. A party may terminate the agreement upon five days written notice.

THE EMPLOYER AS TRAINER

With an OJT agreement you agree to provide skill training for a person with disabilities and to make reasonable efforts to retain the individual upon satisfactory completion of the training. MRC pays a fee for an employer's training expertise in a specific job or jobs. Continued communications between all parties will help to achieve the on the job objectives.

HERE ARE THE STEPS:

1. You have an unfilled job need.
2. MRC will identify a trainee.
3. You and the rehabilitation counselor develop an OJT plan.
4. The trainee is hired for the training period.
5. MRC pays the employer for training trainee. (*weekly, bi-monthly or monthly*)
6. At the completion of the OJT, the trainee is well-prepared to continue in your employment.
7. You may be eligible for a tax credit up to \$2,400.00.

CALL YOUR NEAREST MRC AREA OFFICE FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Boston	617-357-8137	Milford	508 792-7750
Brockton	617-727-8728	Natick	617 727-6208
.....	508-583-1530	.....	508 651-7531
Brookline	617-727-7163	New Bedford	617 727-1310
.....	617-739-9080	.....	508 993-6255
SOMERVILLE	617-727-6679	North Adams	413 663-5391
.....	617-776-2662	Pittsfield	413 499-2720
Fall River	617-727-4578	Plymouth	617 727-7538
.....	508-678-904	.....	508 747-5922
Fitchburg	508 792-7380	Quincy	617 727-8978
Greenfield	413 774-2326	.....	617 471-1600
Holyoke	413 536-8200	Roxbury	617 442-5510
Hyannis	617 727-2288	Sturbridge	508 792-7382
.....	508 775-6131	Springfield	413 736-7296
Lawrence	617 727-5808	Taunton	617 727-4592
.....	508 685-1731	.....	508 823-8141
Lowell	617 727-4632	Walpole	617 727-6908
.....	508 458-4544	.....	508 668-8912
Salem	617 727-1780	Woburn	617 727-0270
.....	508-745-8794	617 932-9163
Malden	617 727-1548	Worcester	508 792-7280
.....	617 324-7160		



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A Guide to the Turning 22 Law

For those severely disabled still in need of services, Chapter 688 serves as a bridge from educational services into the adult human services program. The law provides for a two year transitional process for severely disabled young adults who will lose their entitlement to special education upon graduation or reaching the age of 22. It creates a single point of entry into the adult human services system by developing an Individual Transition Plan (ITP) for every person found eligible.

THE PROCESS

The system is area based and designed to allow a person to remain where his or her family lives. The process for each client is monitored by the Bureau of Transitional Planning at the Executive Office of Human Services. The local school district, through the 766 evaluation team, makes the decision that the person may need additional services beyond graduation or turning 22. The student and/or parents may request the referral, but it must go through the local school district.

The local school district forwards the case to the appropriate human services agency, 2 years prior to the termination of a student's special education.

The Transitional Agency opens a client case file, establishes eligibility, and assists with a referral to the Social Security Administration or the Turning 22 Eligibility unit at MRC.

The Transitional Agency is responsible for developing an ITP. Other appropriate human service agencies, school system personnel, the family and the person with the disability may participate.

ITP is approved by the Executive Office of Human Services and signed off by the Secretary. This plan spells out services needed and states services that will be provided immediately upon graduation.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE

All persons referred to Chapter 688 must be receiving special education services and graduating or turning 22 on or after March 22, 1984, (the effective date of the law). They must be in need of continuing services and unable to work 20 or more hours per week in competitive, non-sheltered, non-supported employment.

HOW ELIGIBILITY IS DETERMINED?

A unit at the MRC determines Turning 22 eligibility for individuals not eligible for Supplementary Security Income (SSI) by reviewing the individual's records work evaluations and/or personal interview, when necessary.

People who are automatically eligible and require no further determination include:

- Anyone receiving SSI and SSDI based on their own disability.
- Anyone listed in the registry of the blind at the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind

THE APPEALS PROCESS

All appeals are directed to the Bureau of Transitional Planning in the Executive Office of Human Services. There are two kinds of appeals under 688:

- A person may appeal the eligibility decision that determined him/her ineligible for Chapter 688.
- A person may reject and appeal the ITP after it has been signed by the Secretary of Human Services.

WHEN SHOULD MY SON/DAUGHTER GRADUATE?

Chapter 766 provides special education services to students until the age of 22 or until the student earns a high school diploma. Services mandated in the Individual Education Plan must be provided. Once a person graduates from school, he or she is no longer eligible.

Young people and their parents should make informed decisions about the many options available under Chapter 766. Adults services are limited to appropriation by the State Legislature. It is important to consider that special education services for older students, 16-22 may be individually designed and more vocationally oriented if the current program is no longer appropriate.

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

Application to the Social Security Administration for SSI eligibility determination is encouraged. In Massachusetts, regardless of the severity of one's disabilities, a person is presumed competent at age 18. Every individual 18 or over must sign all consent forms including the referral form to give permission to share information. If unable to sign, it must be signed by that person who is currently authorized to sign the disabled person's Individual Education Plan. Become familiar with the adult services in your area long before your child reaches graduation or turns 22. Involve yourself with a parent group. Parents have been the stimulus in developing adult services.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Bureau of Transitional Planning	(617) 727-7600
Massachusetts Department of Education, Special Education Div.	(617) 770-7468
Information Center for Individuals with Disabilities	(617) 727-5540, (TTY) 727-5236, 1-800-462-5015
Developmental Disabilities Law Center	(617) 723-8455
Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council	(617) 727-6374
The Federation for Children with Special Needs	(617) 482-2915
Massachusetts Association for Retarded Citizens	(617) 891-6270
Boston Center for Independent Living	(617) 536-2187
Massachusetts Head Injury Foundation	(617) 431-7032
United Cerebral Palsy	(617) 926-5480
Department of Mental Health	(617) 727-5660
Department of Mental Retardation	(617) 727-5608
Department of Social Services	(617) 727-0900
Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission	(617) 727-2183
Mass. Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing	(617) 727-5106 (V/TDD), 1-800-882-1155
Massachusetts Commission on the Blind	(617) 727-5550



OFFICE OF EMPLOYMENT SERVICES
Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission
27-43 Wormwood Street, Boston, MA 02210
(617) 727-2586

CONSUMER EDUCATION PROJECT

Since the mid 1980's state and federal agencies have been making it possible for people with disabilities to choose alternatives to sheltered employment through supported work and supported employment programs. Despite the increasing availability of employment options, many consumers continue to choose sheltered employment as their preferred option. It is evident that one of the reasons why more consumers are not opting for integrated work settings is that they are not educated about their choices.

This project has been funded by the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council to address this concern. Employment consultants have been hired by the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission to research available employment options, develop educational materials, and conduct educational forums for consumers and family members. They will also be advocating for the conversion of segregated employment slots into integrated employment opportunities for people with severe disabilities.

The content of educational forums will focus on:

- increasing the involvement of consumers and their family members
- encouraging consumers and family members to actively participate in the development of their service plan
- educating consumers about long term funding strategies
- exploring employment options and exercising their right to make choices
- dispelling some of the myths about community based employment such as "loss of medical benefits" and concern about "losing the safety net that sheltered employment offers."

This consumer outreach program will target individuals currently receiving employment services, individuals that will be transitioning from school to work, and members of culturally diverse communities. The intent of all outreach activities is to educate consumers about available resources and their right to choose their preferred employment option.

Funding provided by the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council, grant #95-3 (2) (A) (1), through the Office of Employment Services at the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission.

Homebased Employment Program

As an employer, you are interested in finding and keeping a skilled work force that will contribute to the productivity of your organization. You want to find qualified applicants with a minimum help in meeting your hiring objectives.

MRC has been providing qualified, pre-screened applicants to employers throughout Massachusetts for over 30 years. We have worked with employers in a variety of different industries. We have established an excellent track record in assisting employers with a host of employment-related services including:

- Architectural barrier identification
- Affirmative action consultation
- Qualified workers
- Awareness training
- Knowledge of community resources
- Information on disabilities
- On-the-job training
- Tax incentives
- Employee retention

MRC works with the employer community through a statewide network of 5 regional and 27 area offices staffed with experienced, highly skilled professional rehabilitation counselors and supervisors.

HOMEBASED EMPLOYMENT

The MRC Homebased Employment Program provides employment opportunities for persons with physical and/or emotional disabilities to work out of the home. These qualified individuals seek competitive professions. However, due to the nature of the person's disability, overall health, limited transportation, etc., he or she is unable to work during the usual 9 to 5 work schedule outside of the home. Each placement is handled individually to promote proper work scheduling and supervision in order to ensure productive and responsible job fulfillment.

Some possible options could include:

- **Computer Utilization:**
Data entry and analysis, software applications, word processing, programming
- **Telemarketing:**
Information gathering, direct sales, product marketing, public relations
- **Service Functions:**
Clerical responsibilities, small business, professional assistance
- **Light Manufacturing:**
Construction of parts or whole units for industry in accordance with the law

EMPLOYER BENEFITS

- Established employee bank
- Flexible part-time or full-time employment options
- Greater cost-effectiveness through the elimination of office space rental and equipment costs
- Company tax savings through the Targeted Job Tax Credit (up to 40% credit for the first \$6,000 of qualified wages)
- Increased employee productivity

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL ROBERT SONDHEIM AT 617-727-2184 OR MAIL IN THE INCLUDED FORM.



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Albert Jones Jr., 27-43 Wormwood St.,
Boston, MA 02210-1616.
Telephone 617-727-5113 (voice/TDD).



☐ YES, I'M INTERESTED IN KNOWING MORE ABOUT HOW THE MRC HOMEBASED PROGRAM CAN BENEFIT MY COMPANY. CALL ME FOR AN APPOINTMENT.

Name _____

Title _____

Company _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____

Telephone (_____) _____

FAX (_____) _____

Comments: _____

PLEASE RETURN TO:

Homebased Employment Program

Atten: Robert E. Sondheim, Director

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

27-43 Wormwood Street,

Boston, MA 02210-1616

PASS Plan for Achieving Self-Support

WHAT IS SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME (SSI)?

The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program is a federal assistance program in which a person with a disability receives cash payments and medical benefits. To qualify for SSI, an individual:

- must be medically disabled by Social Security definitions; and
- must meet the Income and Resource test. That is, the person must not have income or resources which are greater than the limits set by Congress. Resources may include possessions such as savings, stocks and bonds.

WHAT INCOME IS NOT COUNTED AS PART OF "INCOME AND RESOURCES"?

In deciding whether a person qualifies for SSI payments and, if qualified, how much the payments will be, Social Security will not count certain income amounts. Some of these include:

- an amount of \$20.00 a month from total income. The \$20.00 will be deducted first from unearned income, if any. If there is no unearned income, the \$20.00 will be deducted from earned income; and
- for earned income only – an additional amount of \$65.00 a month plus one half of the remaining amount.
- income set aside for a PASS that is approved by the Social Security Administration:

WHAT IS A PASS?

A PASS is a special provision in the SSI program which permits a person with a disability to set aside specific income or resources, such as savings or stocks, from being counted by Social Security so that the individual:

- who is over income or resource limits for SSI may qualify for SSI; or
- who is already qualified for SSI may receive higher SSI payments.

Income which is not counted because it is being used in a PASS can either be earned, such as wages from a job or work-study, or unearned, such as pensions or SSDI cash payments. For example, if a person who is receiving only SSDI payments can set aside part or all of these payments in a PASS, that person may also become qualified for SSI benefits.

WHAT CAN A PASS BE USED FOR?

A PASS may be used to assist the person to attain or regain the ability to become self-supporting. Income saved or spent as part of an approved PASS can only be used to purchase goods and services necessary to achieve the occupational objective. Some examples of such goods and services are:

- equipment necessary to carry on a trade or business;
- educational or vocational training which is necessary to achieve the occupational objective;
- items associated with this training, such as maintenance and meals at school, books, special equipment and transportation;
- required uniforms; and
- transportation to employment or training, such as the purchase of a vehicle.

WHO CAN WRITE A PASS?

Self-support plans may be written by the person requesting the plan, a vocational rehabilitation agency, a public or private social service agency, or any other group or individual assisting the person requesting the plan. Most plans are written by Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counselors for their clients. If a plan is written by someone outside the VR agency, the Social Security District Office may ask the VR agency to indicate whether the plan is likely to succeed.

An SSA claim representative will assist in writing a PASS.

WHO CAN APPROVE A PASS?

Only Social Security Offices can approve a PASS. If a PASS requires modification before approval, SSA will help with the necessary changes. If a PASS is not acceptable and denied, this decision may be appealed through a local Social Security Office.

CAN A PASS BE AMENDED AFTER IT BEGINS?

If there are changes in the individual's income, expenses or other circumstances after the PASS begins, it may be possible to amend the plan. Amendments, including any extensions to an existing PASS, must be approved by SSA.

IS THERE A TIME LIMIT FOR A PASS?

A PASS can last for an initial period of 18 months and may be extended for one additional period of 18 months, if necessary, for most goods and services. If a person is in an educational or training program, a plan can be continued for an additional 12 months, for a total of 48 months. The plan will remain in effect as long as the individual continues to receive SSI benefits and complies with the requirements of the plan. A plan can be revised at any time, subject to approval by a local Social Security Office.

If Social Security terminates the individual's SSI benefits because he/she is no longer disabled under Social Security Law, the PASS is also terminated. The PASS may also be terminated if the individual fails to comply with the requirements of the plan.

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR A PASS?

The PASS must be in writing and contain the following information.

- It must have a specific occupational objective.
- It must show the amount of income that will be set aside to purchase goods or services that will be necessary to achieve the objective.
- It must show how income or resources will be set aside on a regular basis. For example, income being saved for a PASS must be placed in a separate bank account.
- It must contain a specific period of time in which the occupational objective will be achieved.

PASS FOR CLIENTS OF THE MASSACHUSETTS REHABILITATION COMMISSION (MRC)

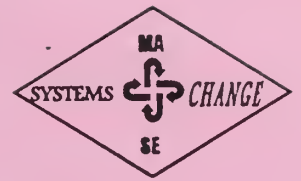
A PASS can be used by qualified MRC clients to purchase goods and services which are not authorized for purchase by MRC. For example, a plan can be written so that the client may save for a vehicle, which is an item that MRC cannot purchase. Also, a PASS can be used to pay for goods and services above the allowable amounts that MRC can pay under agency regulations. For example, a plan can permit an SSI recipient to save for college tuition expenses above allowable MRC limits.

To learn more about a PASS and whether you might qualify contact: The Social Security Office at 1-800-234-5772

MRC



THE MASSACHUSETTS SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SYSTEMS CHANGE PROJECT



The Office of Employment Services of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, has received a grant from the U. S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration, entitled, "*Statewide Supported Employment: Statewide Systems Change.*" This three year project will result in the expansion of supported employment services for individuals with disabilities, including individuals who are members of culturally diverse communities.

The major collaborators of the grant are: Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Massachusetts Assistive Technology Partnership Center (MATP), Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI), and The Massachusetts chapter of the Association for Persons in Supported Employment (MAPSE). The staff is also working in partnership with: the Department of Mental Retardation, Department of Mental Health, Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, Statewide Head Injury Programs, Social Security Administration, Department of Employment and Training, MPWI / The Resource Partnership, Massachusetts Development Disabilities Council, Massachusetts Transition Initiative (Department of Education), Independent Living Centers, Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation, and Massachusetts Association of Rehabilitation Facilities.

The grant proposes to research current practices in Supported Employment, and to

identify barriers which consumers and rehabilitation specialists have encountered. Pilots will be developed to address the barriers, evaluate the outcome, and make recommendations for changes. Staff, along with collaborating agencies, will assist in the development of culturally sensitive, "non-traditional" service delivery systems, and support the achievement of individualized and natural supports, such as Employee Assistance Programs (EAP's). Staff will design training sessions which incorporate sales and business practices into supported employment services.

The Institute for Community Inclusion will conduct Person Centered Planning Sessions for consumers with the most severe disabilities. They will also conduct training on Cultural Diversity, provide "Train the Trainer" sessions for Person Centered Planning Facilitation, and provide Technical Assistance to providers for implementation. Additional trainings will incorporate business practices, such as, Total Quality Management, into supported employment training sessions and provide Technical Assistance to providers for implementation. MATP will create an electronic Bulletin Board System to enhance communication between agencies, consumers, families, and vocational rehabilitation providers, as well as, gain access to the Internet. The Bulletin Board System will include databases of available services and a Job Coach Registry. The staff and collaborating agencies will be coordinating training sessions throughout the state on topics such as: *Cultural*

Diversity, Job Coaching: Current Best Practices, Working with Existing EAP's to Include Individuals with Disabilities, Family and Community Involvement in Supported Employment, and Expansion of Current Employment Options and Programs for Individuals with the Most Severe Disabilities.

In collaboration with Independent Living Centers, the staff will also provide training and technical assistance to consumers who would like to become self-employed Disability Benefit Experts. Research and data collection will be combined with EOHHS's current tracking system, MSEIS. All project research and strategies will be documented and included in a self-contained, accessible implementation guide.

The staffing of the grant is as follows:

Patricia Sargent McCarthy, Project Coordinator, Joe Reale, Program Specialist, Leslie Miller, Policy Specialist, and Greg Pierce, Administrative Assistant.

For more information on the different components of the project contact:

- Patricia-Sargent McCarthy (OES) for overall project information at, 617-727-2586 (V/TTY);
- Paula Sotnik (ICI) for Person Centered Planning and training on culturally sensitive service delivery at, 617-355-4788(V), or 617-355-6956 (TTY);
- Marty Gold (ICI) for Total Quality Management at, 617-355-6529 (V), or 617-355-6956 (TTY);
- Mary Ann O'Toole (MATP) for the BBS at, 617-735-7820 (V), or 800-848-8867 (V/TTY);
- Angela Neal (MAPSE) for the "Forums for Change" at, 617-541-1226 (V).

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REV. 11/10/95

Office of Employment Services

WHAT IS OES?

The Office of Employment Services (OES) is part of the Vocational Rehabilitation Division of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission. OES assists people with severe disabilities who are underserved or unserved to exercise their right to choose, obtain, and retain meaningful community based employment with long term supports as needed and be paid in accordance with their skills and abilities.

WHAT IS COMMUNITY BASED EMPLOYMENT?

Community Based Employment is paid employment at jobs in the community where employees with and without disabilities work together. Professional Employment Specialists assist individuals with disabilities to identify their abilities and interests and match these with appropriate job choices; then locate and interview for prospective jobs in the community. Once the person is hired, the Employment Specialist works with the individual and the employer to develop and enhance social and work skills to maintain employment with on-going training and assistance as needed.

WHAT SERVICES DOES OES PROVIDE?

To secure Community Based Employment the services available through OES include:

- Information: Identification of programs and resources available; assistance to individuals to obtain needed services for employment.
- Case Coordination: Assistance in the planning and the coordination of resources to meet the individuals' needs in order to obtain and maintain employment.
- Referral: Process application to determine eligibility for statewide community based employment programs administered by OES. (Some programs are maintaining a waiting list.) Make referral to other appropriate programs.

The OES Employment Programs include:

- Supported Work for Individuals with Mental Retardation
- Supported Work for Individuals with Mental Illness
- Supported Employment for Individuals with Disabilities (for eligible VR clients)
- Extended Employment for Individuals with Disabilities

To develop Community Based Employment programs the services available through OES include:

- Technical Assistance: Service providers, schools, public agency staff, consumers, advocate groups and parents can receive assistance to develop or obtain employment services in any of the following areas; Funding, Marketing, Job Development, Job Placement, Model Development, Training Strategies, Support Services, Career Enhancement, and Program Evaluation.
- Trainings and Seminars: Can be arranged for group or individual instruction in any of the above areas.

- Dissemination of Resource Information: OES acts as a clearinghouse regarding information about vocational opportunities. This information can be requested to promote the development of Community Based Employment.

HOW DO I APPLY?

To secure Community Based Employment services:

- Request an application by calling (617) 727-2586. OES staff will discuss the application process and attempt to answer any questions that you may have about openings. If appropriate, an application form will be sent to you. It is important to complete and return the application form as soon as possible.

To obtain training and/or technical assistance for the development of Community Based Employment:

- Call the Director at (617) 727-2586. The status of your needs and the available options will be discussed with you. A plan will be developed.

For MRC Vocational Rehabilitation Services:

- Apply at your local MRC area office or call 1-800-245-6543.



The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in employment, and public services provided by government agencies. If consumers or employees of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission believe that they have been discriminated against on the basis of disability, they should contact the Commission's ADA coordinator: Albert Jones Jr., 27-43 Wormwood Street, Boston, MA 02210-1616, Telephone 617-727-5113 (voice/TDD).